

How Alaska and Washington marijuana laws compare

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Alaskans are enjoying legal marijuana, presumably, in private this morning as The Last Frontier becomes the third state embarking on a journey with legal pot. Last November, residents voted to legalize possession, production and sale of marijuana, but the state won't have a regulated market up and running until at least 2016, [the Associated Press reports](#). Voters approved a relatively loose framework for their pot law, and Alaska regulators still have plenty of details to figure out.

So how does legalization in Alaska compare to Washington state?

Possession

In Washington, people 21 and over can possess up to an ounce of marijuana.

In Alaska, people are allowed to possess and display up to an ounce. Alaskans, however, are allowed to grow up to six plants, which makes things a bit trickier. In their homes, Alaskans will be able to possess up to four ounces of harvest pot, [according to an FAQ by the state's Alcoholic Beverage Control Board](#). Possession on federal property, including park and forest lands, is prohibited.

Sales

The sale of marijuana won't be allowed until next year (at least) in Alaska. Washington state took nearly two years to establish its regulated marijuana system, so Alaska's not slow-footing it. [According to Washington Liquor Control Board records](#), 119 stores have been licensed to sell pot so far (though that doesn't mean all of them are open).

Where you can consume

In both states, public consumption is disallowed and could get you a ticket. But Alaska doesn't define what "public" means, [according to Alaska Dispatch News](#). For now, cities are taking matters into their own hands and defining what is public in their communities.

In Washington, you can't consume or even open a package of pot "in view of the general public."

Commercial growing and selling

In Washington, there are three types of marijuana licenses: Production, processing and retail. In Alaska, the [state has nine months](#) to develop a regulatory structure for commercial marijuana licenses, so you'll have to wait and see what they're cooking up.

Opting out of the pot system

Washington courts have decided that cities can choose not to participate in the state's regulated marijuana system, but the issue's far from settled. Some of the cases could end up in the state's high court this year. The Legislature is also considering measures that would incentivize cities and counties to participate in the regulatory system.

In Alaska, language written into the initiative legalizing pot allows communities to opt out of the commercial marijuana system (once it exists).

Taxes

[Washington imposes a 25 percent excise tax on each rung of the marijuana supply chain](#) (producer, processor and retailer). Producers who are processors are able to skip one tax rung. Consumers still pay sales tax, and pot businesses still pay business and occupation (B&O) taxes. It's a complicated system that many marijuana businesses say needs adjustment to make the industry profitable. The state Legislature is taking another look at the system's tax structure this session.

In Alaska, marijuana cultivation facilities will pay an excise tax at a rate of [\\$50 per ounce](#) when it's sold to a retailer or producer.

Regulation

In Washington, recreational marijuana is regulated by the state Liquor Control Board. In Alaska, the [Alcoholic Beverage Control Board](#) will regulate pot unless the state Legislature creates a Marijuana Control Board, [something it can choose to do at any time](#).

Employment law

Neither state protects pot-consuming employees from discrimination.

Can you fly from Seattle to Anchorage with marijuana now?

It's certainly not advisable because airports are under federal jurisdiction. But, [the TSA says it is not screening for marijuana or other drugs](#).

Isn't Alaska really cold, how are they going to grow pot there?

Indoors, silly. [Much of Washington's pot is grown indoors](#) as well, which isn't all that green.

Pot puns

Residents of the Evergreen State have had to suffer through their fair share of pot puns. [The Washington Post has a pretty good roundup](#): "Smokeless in Seattle" and "Seattle's Budding Economy" are just a few examples.

Alaskans, you know it's going to be a rough ride when [The Economist is already using "Baked Alaska" as a headline](#).